

## **Sarah Ann Hackett Stevenson**

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Sarah Ann Hackett Stevenson helped women in numerous ways. An example was when she became the first woman admitted to the American Medical Association. How did this and all other of Sarah Ann Hackett Stevenson's work benefit Illinois history?

Sarah Ann Hackett Stevenson was born February 2, 1841, in Buffalo Grove (now Polo), Illinois. Stevenson was almost thirty-five years of age when she started her successful medical practice. She attended Mount Carroll University, and then graduated from Illinois State Normal University in 1863. She then taught in Illinois for four years.

After teaching, she then studied at Woman's Hospital Medical College in Chicago, where she earned an M.D. degree in 1874. Before earning her M.D., she studied in London, England for a year with Thomas Huxley at the South Kensington Science School.

After earning her M.D., Stevenson set up a medical practice in Chicago. From 1875 to 1880, she was a professor of histology and physiology at her alma mater, which after 1879 was called Woman's Medical College. She was also the first woman on the staff at Cook County Hospital. Also, she was a professor of obstetrics from 1880 until 1894.

In 1886, Stevenson was appointed as an alternate for the American Medical Association convention in Philadelphia, and when the delegate was not able to attend, she became the first women member on the American Medical Association.

Stevenson was also one of the founders of the Illinois Training School for Nurses in 1880. Stevenson also was a part of the Woman's Temperance Union. When Chicago's Frances E. William's Temperance Hospital opened, she was the medical staff president. She also helped found The Home for Incurables and the Chicago Maternity Center. Hackett Stevenson wrote books on biology for school use, many articles for health journals, and became staff correspondent for the *Record Newspaper*.

In 1892, Stevenson, along with two other women physicians headed a crusade to build public baths in poor and immigrant neighborhoods, due to the expected cultural norm of personal cleanliness, and the fact that the poor and working class did not have bathing facilities in their homes. Thanks to their hard work and determination, the first Chicago public bath house opened in 1894. Twenty-one were built between 1894 and 1918.

In 1893, Stevenson was a co-chair with Julia Holmes Smith, who was also an IWPA founder, of the Medical and Surgery Congress and The World's Congress of Medico-Climatology at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

After Stevenson suffered a stroke in 1903, she retired from professional work, and in 1906, she moved into St. Elizabeth's Hospital. She died at the age of 68 at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and is now buried at St. Boniface Cemetery in Chicago.

In conclusion, Sarah Ann Hackett Stevenson benefited Illinois by being a leader to all women. Stevenson was determined, willing, brave, and very knowledgeable, which made her persevere through all of the important work she did in Illinois history. If Sarah Ann Hackett Stevenson had not been there, some information on biology, physiology, and histology may not have been revealed or taught in the way that she viewed it. Sarah

Ann Hackett Stevenson is a very good role-model for young women, and she truly helped women's Illinois history in many ways, big and small. [From American Medical Association, "Women Physicians and the American Medical Association," <<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/17095.html>> (Sept. 2, 2008); James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice L. Reiff, *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*; IWPA, "So We All Can Be Head," <<http://www.iwpa.org/heard0205.html>> (Sept. 10, 2008); and Phyllis J. Read and Bernard L. Witlieb, *The Book of Women's Firsts*.]